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PLAN OF WORK 2010

TOWARDS TRUE STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING



INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends,

We are all or have been students. Everyone felt the complexity of the sometimes never-ending reform process and everyone had a true belief that “something needs to change”. And it was probably true...

This year we will try to focus on what “student-centered learning” should mean and what would be the implications of such a system to the lives of all the students represented by you – ESU members. We would like to bring back the discussion about what higher education should stand for and not just fall into the reaction trap to the obvious catastrophic effects of the economic downturn on each country’s education sector. Although ESU plans to have a strong voice in keeping governments to their promise to uphold higher education as a societal good and as a solution to the crisis.

The European Students’ Union’s vision regarding the Student Centered Learning concept stems from the fundamental belief that the learning process should have at its core learning objectives as they are prioritized by each individual students, also that each (potential) student should be empowered to define those objectives and progress towards them in a unique manner. We are not the same, we do not operate in the same environment, our personality and background are also usually quite different and hence – why should we be fed with information in the same manner and expected to develop in the same way? The fundamental question that is posed by higher education institutions when setting up a new educational programme is “which issues will be taught to the students?”. And this is indeed a teacher perspective that is designed, organized and carried out according to what the beliefs, knowledge, teaching skills and interests of the academic staff.

If we are to empower the students to achieve their full potential, something needs to change. If we look at how we progress in life as students, we’ll probably notice that a number of other areas are instrumental to achieve the learning outcomes you were aiming at. Firstly, it should be about the learning outcomes, not about the teaching objectives. Secondly, we should look beyond teaching methods and underline the importance of student financial and logistical support, quality of studies, freedom for mobility and the list could surely go on. This is why we have decided to make this Plan of Work about how we can reach a true student centered educational systems, while at the same time moving in full throttle towards more support for the ESU members and a long term vision for what the European Students’ Union (ESU) should bring to its members, in its multifaceted role.

The European Students’ Union (ESU) continues to function based on a yearly approved Plan of Work approved in the autumn Board Meeting, in which the vision and strategy for the upcoming year is proposed by the acting Executive Committee and is enriched and adopted by its members. The ESU committees, in addition to the Executive Committee form the group of 17 elected representatives, also called “hacks”. In addition, the European Students’ Union (ESU) relies on Working Groups, that are chaired by ESU members and Task Forces which are formed by individuals that are

interested in a matter of great relevance for a specific topic. The Board Meeting is also the occasion for electing the ESU representatives that will carry on the Plan of Work and to vote on ESU policy papers, statements, internal and external motions, membership matters, budget, activity reports, financial reports etc. A very useful insight into the ESU *modus operandi* can be found in the “Board Meeting for beginners” session that precedes every Board Meeting edition. Currently, ESU is redefining its long terms strategy, with the help of the ESU Vision Task Force and that will enable more continuity and stability for each edition of the Plan of Work. Finally, the responsibility for the fulfillment of the Plan of Work relies on the shoulders of the Executive Committee members that are supported in achieving this challenging task by the other ESU elected representatives and by the ESU Secretariat members.

As mentioned in the General Executive Committee report, the cross-committee work on a number of areas has been difficult and hence we consider that this Plan of Work will aid in constructing a more effective cooperative way of working. As such, under the coordination of the Executive Committee, the Social Affaires Committee and the Academic Affaires Committee will focus on achieving Chapters 1 and 2 of the present Plan of Work, while the Student Union Development Committee and the Committee for Internal Development would push for achieving all the objectives under Chapter 3. This division is not made according to the committee supposed primary roles, but to the European Students’ Union (ESU) development dimension: content building, political and internal. And all the chapters are underpinned by the dire need to provide all the possible tools and representation support at the European level to our members in their national fights for student’s rights, views and needs.

What should be said is that the Executive Committee feels that some of the items for next year’s Plan of Work can be best fulfilled with a sustainable expansion of the Secretariat with at least one Executive Assistant that will take over part of the current administrative overload of the other staff members and a Director, that will deal primarily with Secretariat management, fundraising and the administration of the Experts’ Pool. Also, full commitment from the elected representatives will be needed in order to make the Plan of Work more than a shopping list for overworked elected representatives. This year, we have asked the entire ESU Secretariat to give us feedback on the Plan of Work, with a special focus on the Financial Officer’s view on whether this is realistic in terms of financial possibilities. In this sense, please note that some of the mentioned project applications have not been submitted yet and their corresponding activities and dossier items will not be carried, partially or entirely, unless we secure the financial support for them.

The internal consultation process for the development of the Plan of Work has started in August in order to allow the Board Members and all elected representatives to be a part of each stage of the design. We firmly believe that only with the Board members’ ownership and full commitment, this document can be transformed into a series of concrete achievements in the year to come.

The items of this plan of work are developed in the following way, under each of the three main chapters:

1. Political priorities

We will concretely point out the political goals to be achieved under the issue. The points are derived from the relevant policy papers and political strategies that are in place.

2. Activities

It is explained what kind of activities will be organised under the issue. These can be meetings, conferences or trainings in which members are involved.

3. Dossier

Under all priority areas, we will try to develop an online dossier for the paperwork. The items that should be collected or developed under the area are described here. This can include policy papers, statements and reports.

4. Finances

It will be described how the activities will be budgeted for. Also, the funding sources that we have ensured or are still seeking for will be pointed out.

As a final note, please consider that every addition made to the Plan of Work should be doubled by downprioritising another propose item and by identifying the corresponding financial support. We would be happy to have an animated debate on this document and come up with the best fitted Plan of work for your legitimate needs and interests as ESU members. This was what we thought we would need to do. Please bring us to your reality, continuing this years' quest for a stronger student movement...☺

Thank you all in advance,

The ESU Executive Committee

CHAPTER 1 – MAKING STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING A REALITY

The overarching concept of student centered learning should not encompass only curricula reform and modernising pedagogy, nor should it mean a shift away from contact hours to distance education. A real paradigm shift requires that all students have access to high quality higher education with everything that this entails: the fulfillment of the social dimension goals, the empowerment of students and student organisations on quality assurance matters, understanding the true meaning of lifelong learning as a educational concept, pushing for the mobility target, understanding the true meaning of lifelong learning and catering for more employability, while making sure that financing is no obstacle for each student to develop hers/ his full potential. This is why this year we are proposing student centred learning as an overarching concept that can frame all of our political priorities under the first chapter of the Plan of Work. We have the unique chance of defining the concept in this holistic understanding and with this to set ESU as the main stakeholder regarding student centered learning, becoming pioneers in promoting it, with the ammunition given by the results of the *Time for a new paradigm in education: Student Centred Learning* (T4SCL project).

1. 1. Mainstreaming the European Students' vision on a new paradigm for education: Student centred learning (SCL)

Political Priorities

- a. Together with Education International bringing proactively forward into discussion the shared teachers' and students' vision on student centred learning (SCL)
- b. Gathering knowledge on best practices for student centred learning
- c. Empowering our member unions to lobby for a sound student centred learning approach within their higher educational systems
- d. Establishing ESU as an important voice advocating for a sound lifelong learning strategy within the European Higher Education Area institutional context
- e. Pushing for an understanding of LLL as a general educational framework being mainstreamed in all HE missions
- f. Pushing for the recognition of prior learning being available without financial burdens for students and being implemented in a fair and consistent way fighting formal barriers for students
- g.

Activities¹

- a. Organise two trainings for student and staff representatives on student centered learning in 2010 in the frame of the „*Time for a new paradigm in education: Student Centred Learning*“ (T4SCL) project (pilot training in June 2010, actual European wide training end of September 2010)

¹ The orientative timing of various activities stems from the „*Time for a new paradigm in education: Student Centred Learning*“ (T4SCL) project grant agreement

- b. Organise a conference in Romania on student centered learning (May 2010)
- c. Support 5 national events on student centered and lifelong learning (to take place by October 2010)
- d. Organise the 20th European Student Convention in Belgium on Student Centered Learning including the T4SCL stakeholders forum (October 2010)
- e. Carrying the partner project FLLLEX (on the implementation of lifelong learning at the institutional level with EURASHE)

Dossier

- a. Desk research on student centered learning (byl end of March 2010)
- b. Conducting a survey on student centered learning among the ESU members and Education International affiliates and analysing its results (by end of May 2010)
- c. Publish a tool kit for the usage of teachers, institutions and student unions on how to implement student centered learning practises (finished by end of September 2010)
- d. Publish a report on the Time for Student Centered Learning project which should include the results of:
 - The dedicated chapters in the Bologna at the Finish Line publication (BAFL).
 - An attempt at trying to gauge both NUS and ordinary student views on the student centered learning, as much as possible through both an ESU survey (for NUSs) and through desk research on students' and institutions' opinions
 - The results of a discussion of the issue in one of the panels at the T4SCL conference in Romania and/or a consultation on this with our member unions

Financial Resources

- a. The budget of the project *Time for a new paradigm in education: Student Centred Learning* (T4SCL project)
- b. 20th European Student Convention will be partly founded through *contribution of Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union*
- c. The European Commission administrative grant
- d. ESUs participation in the FLLLEX's project

1.2 Quality Assurance (QA)

Political Priorities

- a. Strengthening and institutionalising ESU's activity on quality assurance
- b. Further develop the Quality Assurance component of the experts pool
- c. Develop and promote the social dimension and strategies for widening participation as integrated and vital part in the quality assurance process

Activities

- a. Organise a second study session on quality assurance during summer 2010 to consolidate the experts' pool of quality assurance experts

- b. Involving the ESU members and Quality Assurance experts in developing a vision for revising the European Standards and Guidelines and mainstreaming student participation in QA through both a broad consultation process and the coordination of a task force of some quality assurance experts reviewing the ESG
- c. Formulating a concept and development strategy for the experts' pool in QA (including description of the trainings and conditions for pool members)
- d. Board Meeting 59 Seminar in Israel on Quality Assurance
- e. Fulfilling our role as co-organiser of the 2010 edition of the European Quality Assurance Forum and facilitate the students contribution to this event by selecting and supporting the participating ESU student delegation

Dossier

- a. Developing a set of social standards in quality assurance
- b. ESU proposal for a process starting the revision of the ESG
- c. Leaflet on the activities of ESU in QA and the European Students' Experts' Pool on QA

Financial resources

- a. Application for a grant to Council of Europe for the study session
- b. Apply for a project (possibly the Lifelong Learning Programme) on QA involving the mentioned activities

1.3 Financing of Higher Education

Political Priorities

- a. Further develop the cooperation with the European University Association, Education International and the OECD on assessing the impact of the economic crisis on higher education with a special focus on access, participation in higher education and social dimension
- b. Continue pressing for higher education to be acknowledged as a public good and public responsibility, crucial for the enhancing and promotion of sustainable equality and human rights
- c. Building knowledge and argumentation on student financing systems and HE funding models and disseminate this to member unions in order to empower them
- d. Help in planning a European wide „Action week“ against budget cuts in higher education, by providing content and communication support and raising the profile of national actions against budget cuts within the ESU means of communication: website, newsletter, public appearances etc.

Activities

- a. Organising the Board Meeting 58 seminar on financing of higher education and the social dimension

- b. Establishing a task force or a Working Group on financing to coordinate the Action Week and help with gathering information from the national level

Dossier

- a. Developing an argumentation paper for increasing public investment in higher education based on the societal returns of higher education and the universal right to education

Financial resources

- a. Administrative grant from the European Commission
- b. Action Week planned and organised in 2011 with human resources and campaign support from member unions
- c. Grant from the Spanish Presidency of the EU given for supporting the organisation of the BM58 seminar
- d. Budget of the Financing the Students' Future(FiSt) project, if the LLP project application is approved

1.4 Education for All

Political priorities

- a. Continue the efforts to promote equal opportunities, diversification and inclusion of societal under-represented groups in higher education, as being the top priority at the European and national level.
- b. Promote and further develop ESU's expertise in tools to ensure equal opportunities for all (potential) students.
- c. Expand the ESU's networking and build partnerships with organizations focused on social issues within the higher education

Activities

- a. Organise the BM 58 Seminar in Spain seminar on financing and Social Dimension
- b. Establish a Working group on immigration policies and students from ethnic/ immigrant minority
- c. Disseminate the Equity project outcomes (handbook, e-learning platform) and other materials (equality handbook)
- d. Continue the cooperation with EUROSTUDENT on data collection
- e. Participation in the Access Africa project of European University Association (EUA) to gain knowledge on the situation regarding access and retention in Africa
- f. Participation in the EQUNET project, coordinated by MENON, that aims at understanding the field of access, mapping actors and stakeholders and defining equity indicators

Dossier

- a. Design and implement a strategy for following-up on the Bologna national action plans on social dimension (i.e. country profiles "barometer", follow-up on national reporting etc)

Financial resources

- a. The Board Meeting(BM) 58 and BM seminar will be covered through the Spanish presidency of the Council of the European Union
- b. Participation in Access Africa project

1.5 Student support services

Political priorities

- a. Promote and further develop ESU's expertise on student support services
- b. Develop expertise on student health
- c. Partnership with ECSTA – the European Council for Student Affairs

Activities

- a. Develop a policy paper on student support services
- b. Organise information exchange between the ESU members on student support services.

Dossier

- a. Policy paper on student support services

1.6 Mobility

Political Priorities

- a. Strengthen cooperation with relevant organizations to push for good, coherent data on the socioeconomic background of mobile students
- b. Push for adoption of the „20% mobile students by 2020“ benchmark also on the EU level

Activities

- a. Developing recommendations for possible measurement indicators
- b. Political lobbying for mobility to become a priority on both the institutional and national level where this is not the case

Dossier

- a. Various ESU written reactions to the EU proposals regarding the mobility benchmark and the “Youth on the Move” initiative within EU2020 strategy

Financial resources

ESU 2010 administrative grants

1.7 Gender equality

Political priorities

- a. Ensuring ESU's recognition as a stakeholder in achieving gender equality in higher education

Activities

- a. Promoting the Gender Equality policy paper and the GE handbook externally and among our members and associate members
- b. Plan to organise a Gender Equality Stakeholders Event in 2011 with a focus on institutional Gender Mainstreaming Strategies and positive discrimination measures on the national and institutional level

Financial resources

- a. European Commission administrative grant

1.10. Third cycle

Political priorities

- a. Deepen the cooperation with Eurodoc, Education International and other relevant bodies regarding the issues around 3rd cycle
- b. Increase ESU's knowledge about the link between higher education and research
- c. Increase ESU's knowledge about different conditions of 3rd cycle students, especially regarding access to the 3rd cycle, the status of doctoral students and the social dimension in general.

Activities

- a. Continue the mandate of the Working group on the third cycle and the link between higher education and research until BM59
- b. Following up on the activity of the Working group on the third cycle and the link between higher education and research (WG) and the BM57 Seminar results
- c. Enhancing ESU's cooperation with Eurodoc, EUA, European Commission's Directorate General for Research and Education International on the third cycle and the link between higher education and research

Dossier

- a. Developing the existing ESU policies related to 3rd cycle
- b. Developing a strategy, together with the WG, towards creating a structure of cooperation, in order to, in one way or another, better safeguard the interests of 3rd cycle students on the European level

Financial resources

- a. The European Commission administrative grant

CHAPTER 2 – ESU’s strategy towards the Bologna Process, the Lisbon agenda and other political processes

2.1 The Lisbon Strategy

Political Priorities

- a. Strengthen ESU’s capacity and knowledge on the Lisbon strategy and the activities of various European bodies in this regard
- b. Raising awareness focusing on the need of real political commitment to education that provides basic skills both for individual development and in the labour market guaranteeing long-term and not only short-term success
- c. Promoting the notion that the Lisbon goals can only be built by having a long term vision based on an increased access in education, lifelong learning, quality assurance and employability thus emphasizing that the foundation of Lisbon Strategy is to be found in social cohesion
- d. Mainstreaming student participation and thus pushing for a more democratic approach in the implementation of the Lisbon agenda priorities

Activities

- a. Organise the 19th European Student Convention/European Student Summit in Vienna, Austria on the topic of the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Agenda
- b. Disseminating information to the ESU members on the Lisbon agenda political developments
- c. Reacting to the Lisbon II strategy published on 11th/12th December 2009
- d. Collaborating with stakeholders for increasing the accountability of the EU actors in the implementation of the Lisbon strategy
- e. Monitor developments in the European Commission, European Parliament and Council of Ministers related to the higher education significant measures taken within the Lisbon agenda
- f. Developing the argumentation on the difficulty of the interference of the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy

Dossier

- a. Detailed reader on Bologna-Lisbon for the European Student Summit – ESC19 and intention of a Student Declaration to be adopted during this summit

Financial resources

- a. OH and Austrian government contribution for the European Student Summit – ESC19
- b. ESCBI project funding related to the Student Summit

2.2 The Bologna Process

Political priorities

- a. Contribute to shaping the 2009-2012 Bologna Work-Plan according to the priorities of the Leuven/ Louvain la Neuve ministerial communique, with a special focus on social dimension, mobility and student centered learning
- b. Promote the ESU policy in the Anniversary Ministerial Conference 2010 in Budapest/Vienna and its declaration
- c. Work together with other relevant stakeholders towards a two sided focus: measuring the Bologna Process progress, especially for social dimension and mobility, while keeping a strong focus on national and institutional Bologna Process implementation

Activities

- a. Take part in creating and developing benchmarks and measurable targets for the social dimension within both the EHEA level (in the structures of the Bologna Follow-up group) as well as for the national level.
- b. Monitor and influence the implementation of the national strategies for social dimension in cooperation with ESU's members
- c. Input into the work of the BFUG WG on mobility, while aiming at a synchronisation of the mobility indicators within the Bologna and EU areas.
- d. Contribute to mainstreaming the European students' priorities within the Working Groups on Mobility, Social Dimension, Recognition, Qualifications Framework, Bologna Process implementation, international openness and transparency tools.
- e. Keep the ESU members informed regarding the Bologna Follow-Up Group and its sub-working groups on a regular basis and establish an information exchange dialogue with the ESU members

Dossier

- a. Further develop the ESU policy on the Bologna Process working areas
- b. Publish the Bologna At The Finish Line (BAFL) publication and launch it within the student summit and promote it in the Anniversary Ministerial Conference 2010
- c. Launch the documentary Faces of Bologna (FoB) as a students' perspective on the Bologna Process within the student summit and promote it in the Anniversary Ministerial Conference 2010

Financial Resources

- a. Project grant of the Enhancing the Student Contribution to the Bologna Implementation (ESCBI) project

2.3 General political alliances

- a. Signing partnership agreements with the European Commission, Erasmus Student Network, Council of Europe, UNESCO, Eurodoc and updating the agreement with Education International, European Council for Student Affairs
- b. Further cooperation with regional and international sectorial student platforms

CHAPTER 3 - Development of a stronger student movement through a stronger European Students' Union (ESU)

The innovation ESU has experienced in the past years calls for a period of reflection on how to build out the European student movement in the next decade. Financial security and qualitative membership in a strong and coherent ESU Board are crucial to maintain the well-respected position ESU has obtained in the past 27 years.

While continuing our role as stakeholders in the Higher Education setting through the work on Student Centered Learning, ESU has to improve the stability of its organization. The never-ending flow of elected representatives can no longer be an excuse for malpractices as experienced in the past. An expansion towards a stronger secretariat, more support for elected representatives and attention for the quality of our communication towards the board and externals have to result in a European Students' Union supported by all of its members and cared about by whomever close to it.

The policies ESU adopted are worthless without the consent of a strong base, our board of 47 national unions of students. In order to have that strong base a Board-wide dialogue is the first and necessary step and for that dialogue to happen a common understanding of working methods and cultural diversity is needed to allow student representatives from all over Europe to speak out for their students without any threshold. By putting those differences up for discussion and exchange, the intercultural barriers to participate in ESU's democratic processes have to be dissolved.

But a strong ESU Board also requires strong member unions. The start of capacity building trainings based on the four pillars of the student movement combined with various incentives (information exchange platform, improved member section on webpage, content trainings) for knowledge sharing between unions mutually and with ESU have to nurture the capacity and knowledge of our member unions. Study and quality enhancement visits will help to assess and enhance the quality of our members, to review their fulfillment of the membership criteria and to prospect the political situation and organization of students in a country. Another aspect of national strength comes from the respect for Student Rights in one's homeland. By continuing on the path set out by the Lights on the Rights -campaign last year, ESU - with and through its members - will strive for the acknowledgement of Student Rights.

3.1 Students' rights and intercultural dialogue

Political Priorities :

- a. To support improving the capacity and the work, thus the quality, of the ESU members and other unions of students
- b. To work on an intercultural understanding between the different members of the ESU board and strive for common solidarity
- c. To maintain and further develop cooperation and information exchange with regional and sectoral student platforms on the global level
- d. To reinforce, clarify, promote and implement the Students' Rights Charter

Activities :

- a. Develop further and provide training on the pillars of the student movement and capacity building on the national and local level and develop a branch for it in ESU's Experts pool, with a special focus on student union financing
- b. Promote the national implementation of the Students' Rights Charter in addition to fighting for the recognition of students rights in general.
- d. Better inform ESU's board members of the opportunities of the Council of Europe's Youth in Action programme in the light of bilateral capacity building of national unions of students. The programme contains funding for job shadowing projects as well as study visits and seminars on topics of mutual interest
- e. Establish stable relations and information exchange practices with regional and international sectoral student platforms through regular contact and potential joint projects
- f. Organising an interactive session on cross-cultural communication and understanding within the two European Student Conventions organized by ESU in 2010 in the conventions in Austria and Belgium
- g. Develop information material for the national and local level on the four pillars of the student movement, including short briefing chapters on relevant topics of Higher Education
- h. Organise two country study visits in Albania and Belarus, with the support and diplomatic protection of the Council of Europe

Dossier :

- a. Developing a set of guidelines for the reporting of Study Visits and prepare a set of guidelines for quality assessment and enhancement visits
- b. Develop a guiding leaflet and a more detailed online version with examples of good and bad practices for the Students' Rights Charter

Financial resources :

- a. The ESU Administrative grants
- b. Further new ideas have to get supported by CoE EYF Category A.B and/or D Grants.
- c. Dedicated funding from the Council of Europe for the two country study visits

3.2 Internal development

Political Priorities

- a. Develop ESU long term vision in cooperation with the ESU vision Task Force
- b. Diversification of ESU finances and increase the financial capacity
- c. Increase the capacity of the Secretariat to sustain ESUs activities
- d. Increase the visibility of ESU's activities
- e. Increase the accountability of ESU elected representatives

- f. Develop and renew the understanding and procedures of membership in ESU

Activities²

- a. Organise a full consultation of member unions, alumni and external partners on the future development and vision for the future
- b. Develop further the internal quality assurance processes by organising peer review processes for elected representatives and the Board
- c. Employing a Director with the responsibility of fundraising and managing the Experts' Pool in its job description to professionalise fundraising activities. This activity will take place provided ESU secures the financial support for it.
- d. Develop a strategy on how to increase financial support and secure insurance for ESU elected representatives
- e. Look at how the ESU webpage can link ESU more with its member unions, and increase the knowledge of national level actions
- f. Testing the liquidity indicators suggested by the Commission for Internal Audit (CIA)
- g. Expand the administrative support for ESU Experts' pool
- h. Start the evaluation of the ESU structures in order to develop proposals for BM60
- i. Revising the per diem system and lump sum per diems
- j. Ensure the implementation of ESUs communication strategy with a special focus on building the link between ESU representatives and ESU members, followed through by the Committee on Internal Development
- k. Set up an ESU Library
- l. Set up a Membership Task Force, which will gather information on existing members, create a proposition on membership criteria and on renewing the existing procedures on applying for membership. This would include creating a new template for reporting Study Visits and also reforming the way the team is selected.

Dossier

- a. Develop an internal quality assurance system with clear recommendations and necessary guidelines
- b. Develop a strategy and develop guidelines for the administration of ESU Experts' Pool
- c. Develop guidelines for coordinating publications
- d. Develop and publish tools that allow the representatives and the Board to monitor fulfillment of the Plan of Work more consistently

Financial resources

- a. The financial resources come mainly the European Commission and Council of Europe administrative grants, membership fees and fundraising.

² Activity c depends on the Board approving the Director salary specific Budget line in order to employ a Director for 2010.

- b. The vision task force work should be included to all major ESU events budgets.

3.3 Gender equality

Since Gender Equality should be mainstreamed both internally and externally, the work appears in both main POW 2010 sections.

Proposed activities:

- a. Create a Gender Equality section on ESU's website, with publications, briefing notes, articles on GE issues etc. , while ensuring a safe space for Gender Equality NUS officers network to communicate (for more details please see the GECC report)
- b. Continue the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and monitor the progress towards achieving gender equality in ESU